(c) Suitable action was taken by the concerned State Governments to curb the rising trend in the prices of onions. However, no action under the provisions of the Essential Commodities Act 1955 could be taken since onion ceased to be an essential commodity with effect from 25th November, 2004.

(d) In order to check the price of onions, the National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India Ltd. procured onions from various States, including Rajasthan, for distribution to consumers at concessional rates.

Farmers living Below Poverty Line

288. DR. GYAN PRAKASH PILANIA: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) the total number of farmers in the country, and percentage of total population of the country;

(b) how many of the above farmers are living Below Poverty Line, the percentage thereof, and how does it compare with total percentage of people living Below Poverty Line for the whole country;

(c) the per capita income of the above farmers who are living beyond poverty line, and how it compares with average per capita income of the country; and

(d) the special steps being taken by Government to ameliorate the pitiable plight of these poorest of the poor farmers?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SHARAD PAWAR): (a) As per Population Census 2001, the total number of cultivators in the country was 127.31 million against the total population of 1028.61 million which forms 12.38 per cent of the total population of the country.

(b) Out of the total population, persons below the poverty line in 1999-2000 were 26.10 per cent whereas in rural area it was 27.09 per cent of the total rural population in the country. The proportion of persons belonging to farmer households (self-employed in Agriculture) below the poverty line was estimated to be 20.2 per cent as per the survey conducted by NSSO in 1999-2000.

(c) The per capita income of the country was Rs. 20989/- in 2003-04. The poverty line for all India has been taken to be Rs. 327.56 per capita consumption expenditure for rural areas.

(d) Government is implementing a number of schemes for development of the Agriculture, Horticulture and Livestock sectors. Most of these schemes have special assistance components for small and marginal farmers. The strategies formulated by the Government for making the agriculture sector more vibrant and dynamic so as to increase its production and productivity with resultant increase in the income of farmers in general and small/marginal farmers in particular include (i) enhancing institutional credit flow to the farmers and strengthening of cooperative credit structure; (ii) ensuring the timely availability of quality inputs; (iii) promoting farmer friendly, demand driven agriculture extension system; (iv) accelerating diversification to high value crops including horticulture activities; (v) strengthening infrastructure and the supply chain; (iv) optimizing the efficient utilization of available water resources through micro irrigation and enhancing the sustainability of dry-land/rainfed farming system; (vii) reforming agricultural markets, and widespread use of post harvest technology; and (viii) putting in place a broader spectrum of risk management apparatus for farmers.

Supplying Urea and DAP to States

289. SHRI VARINDER SINGH BAJWA: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Urea and Di-Ammonium Phosphate (DAP) fertilizers are in great demand in some States;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) whether these fertilizers are supplied to States for the use of farmers as per their requirement?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SHARAD PAWAR): (a) and (b) For the current Rabi 2005-06 season, demand/requirement of Urea and DAP has been assessed at 119.86 lakh metric tonnes and 44.58 lakh metric tonnes respectively in consultation with States, Department of Fertilisers, Fertiliser suppliers/manufacturers and Fertiliser Association of India. These are higher by 10.63% and 13.18% respectively as compared to the Rabi 2004-05.

(c) Yes, Sir.